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SpeakOut
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[SOPHIA T.]

KINNE: My name is Sophia Kinne. I am in Rauner [Special Collections] Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. The date is February 29th [sic; 28th], 2020, and I am talking with?

PASTUCK: [recording glitch; unintelligible], and I'm a Class of 2011, and I am based in New York City, and I am located in New York City right now on the call.

KINNE: Great. Okay. So, Mel—and should I call you "Mel"? Is that what you prefer?

PASTUCK: Yeah. Great.

KINNE: So, Mel, if you don't mind, could you start with where are you from? Talk a little bit about, like, what it was like there, what it was like to grow up there, that kind of thing.

PASTUCK: Sure, yeah. So I grew up in New Jersey [recording glitch; unintelligible], suburban/maybe even considered rural part of New Jersey, out in Long Valley. [Recording glitch; unintelligible] it was pretty far out there, about an hour and forty-five minutes west of New York City, maybe two hours, depending. And it's in northern New Jersey. I grew up there—I—spent basically my entire life up until I went to college there, and—in the same town. And it was—it was a pretty small town. It was under 4,000 people in total in the whole town. It was a, sort of— I went to a medium-sized public high school.

I—I think in many ways I did—I did really enjoy my time growing up in Long Valley. I—it was a very [recording glitch; unintelligible] there was a lot of open space and grass, and there was a lot of farmland and horses and things all around, so I feel like in general I just really enjoyed the—the setting out there.

But I think in many ways what I—what I didn't even know that I was missing was a lot of exposure to other ideas and types of people. It was a pretty homogenous community. So I think it was really only when I went to Dartmouth [College] for the first time that I was exposed to a much more heterogeneous group of people from all different places and with all different backgrounds and perspectives, whereas I had grown up in a ninety-eight percent white community and had pretty much no exposure to queer people or really any people of color.

And it's a pretty conservative town and neighborhood as well, the only county in New Jersey that is consistently Republican. So it—it was a—it was a, I would say, in many ways a—a pretty idyllic place to grow up but also a place where I wasn't even exposed to the types of community that one could even interact with to have more diverse or broad perspectives on the world.

KINNE: Yeah, okay. Would you say—and do you think your family matched the general, like, conservative kind of—like, fit in there, I guess?

PASTUCK: Definitely. It was a—my parents were and are still very conservative.

KINNE: And did you have siblings? Or do you have siblings? Sorry, I know I said "did."

PASTUCK: Yeah. Yeah, hah-hah-hah-hah. Yes, I do. I have two younger sisters.

KINNE: All right. And can you tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up with your family specifically?

PASTUCK: Yeah. I mean, I would say in many ways it echoes what—what I previously had said. I would say that my family was very conservative. I wasn't even exposed to the types of ideas that potentially have conflict with them about, so I—I would say in many ways I just took what they said as face-value truth in a lot of ways.

And it really only took—and, you know, I was even talking to my sister about this on the phone the other day. You know,

we're still kind of unlearning some of the stuff that we had learned and been taught when we were growing up, so—at the time, I wouldn't say that I came into much conflict with them until I went to school and actually had exposure to more diverse thought processes and ideas.

And that's when I would say things with my family became a lot more challenging and contentious, whereas prior to that, I think that in many ways I—I'd been—I'd been a great student who had good grades and—you know, I was captain of my—my sports team, and I—I had been—I had been doing a lot of things that my parents hadn't been asking of me, and I hit those benchmarks.

So I think in a lot of ways, the ability to be the best and be successful in these criterion box marks—the boxes that they had—had given to me to mark had allowed me to—to focus and channel my energy into something rather than think more broadly about: who I am, and what do I care about, and developing an independent perspective and thought processes. I really— I hadn't done that. [Chuckles.]

KINNE: Right.

Were you religious, growing up?

PASTUCK: My family was very Catholic. I wouldn't say that I was particularly religious, but my—my family is, and remains very Catholic.

KINNE: Okay, yes.

Do you remember—can you talk a little bit about, like, end of high school, why you chose Dartmouth or, you know, what you were looking at for—in the college, that kind of thing?

PASTUCK: Yeah. Well, I—I was looking for a school that had great reviews and great ratings and was a top school, and Dartmouth was certainly one of those. And I was looking at the set of all the Ivy League schools. I was looking at a couple of schools in Pennsylvania as well that were liberal arts colleges.

And I remember—there wasn't anyone in my family who had gone to Dartmouth, but it just was—you know, it—it was something that when I had come and visited, it felt very at home. I had come and visited actually really early. I—I visited my—I think my sophomore year of high school, and I never had come back, but I just remembered the tour guide being so effusive about how much she loved the place, and walking around, she—you could see that she was running into her friends, and then she was just very over the top and—in her praise of the school. And I think in many ways that stood out to me as someone who just—you know, she really was passionate and loved the place that she was.

And I—I had gone after that—you know, because that was pretty early in the process. I think it was the first college I had ever really gone a toured, and we happened to do it because we were up in New Hampshire just as a happenstance, on a family vacation, and we'd gone and—and visited a couple of other schools, but I'd never met another tour guide who had that level of passion about the places they were at that felt genuine and that really resonated with me. So I always felt like I was, like, comparing all of the new tour guides to the tour guide that I—I met at Dartmouth.

And I was thrilled that I got in, and I went up to the Dimensions [of Dartmouth] program, and that really solidified my intent to go. But I think even before that, I—I sort of was pretty sure that I wanted to come here, just because of that experience and how beautiful I found the campus and the passion that I'd seen from my tour guide.

And the one other piece that I would note is that my parents were very excited that Dartmouth seemed to have a reputation for being a more conservative Ivy League school. [Chuckles.] And that gave them a lot of ease, so it made them—their decision in sending me here feel—you know, hindsight is 20/20. That was probably not—[Chuckles.] That was an inaccurate perception. But that was their perception at the time, so it made it—it made it a lot easier for them to be excited about sending me to Dartmouth.

KINNE:

Right.

Also, just as a side note, something I meant to mention before: I'm trying not to, like have a lot of "mm-hms" and affirmatives throughout what you're talking, just for the recording purposes, but sorry if it's unsettling for you to just be talking and—

PASTUCK: No, it is not unsettling.

KINNE: Okay, great. [Both chuckle.]

PASTUCK: Thank you for making me aware. That is good to know.

KINNE: Yes.

So in your notes, you talk about—and based on what you've said—you talk about not being out until you got to college, and could you talk a little bit about, like, if you were aware of your sexuality, if you knew that you were different from, like,—based around—based on the people you were around and stuff, or anything like that?

PASTUCK: Yeah. So I found—I definitely thought that I was different. I didn't really know how. I think that in part my insistence on my distinctiveness was probably related to my exceptionalism rather than anything else prior to—to coming to Dartmouth. I—I think in many ways I—I just linked my—like, my success in school as—as making me kind of "other" and thinking, *Oh, no, like, I'm in*—like, again, I went to a public high school, but at my public high school there were about twenty of us, between fifteen and twenty of us that all had classes together, and we had every single class together because we were in the international baccalaureate program.

So I think I felt "othered" in that group, just that I was in this very narrow group of students who had every single class together, because we were all in this one advanced program. But I didn't really tie it to more than that. I think I didn't really figure that out until I was in college.

And I definitely wasn't aware that I was gay in high school. And I think—I think there were—there were—I—I would say that there were hints the summer before my freshman year that I—I had a—I had a very good friend, and I—I began to

realize and feel that I was—I was feeling differently about her because she was—she was—she had a girlfriend as well, and I slowly began to realize that some of the feelings that I was feeling were jealousy rather than friendship.

So I think that that—that was just kind of the only tickle of a feeling that I had prior to going to school, but I sort of just moved that—moved past that and—and washed that away. And I—

KINNE: And that was, like, right before college?

PASTUCK: Yeah, that was only a couple of weeks before coming to college. And when I came to school, I joined the women's rugby team, and I did not—there were certainly a lot of out gay women on the team, which was I think—like, the level—I—I just hadn't had an exposure to queer people or lesbians or gay women or any—you know, any of the above. And so I think that that was a really big transformational moment for me to see, like, *Wow! There are these people who are out and gay, and, you know, they—like, living life. And I actually really connect with them, and they're good friends—like, they could be my good friends.*

And they became my best friends at school, so I think actually—you know, through—and I didn't come out until my—my sophomore year, but I think really it was after—after my freshman year, when I went back home and spent that first summer back at home that I realized that I was gay, because I—you know, I had time and—to reflect on my first year of school and think about, you know, like, *Oh, well, why—why did I really connect with these people? Like, what was—what was it about them?* And I think that's when I really first knew, but I only actually came out my sophomore fall.

KINNE: Okay, yeah, great.

So thinking more about Dartmouth now and your time at Dartmouth—so when did you join the rugby team?

PASTUCK: It—it must have been only one or two weeks after starting school, so it would have been—it would have been my freshman fall. I remember going to—they had an event—a

recruiting even on the [Dartmouth] Green for when the freshmen were, you know, all just trying to figure out what activities to do. And I went, and I met up with a couple of other people afterwards, and I just kind of—it happened from there. [Chuckles.]

KINNE: Had you played rugby in high school, or was it other sports?

PASTUCK: No, I'd done—I'd done other sports in high school, so this was my first time—my first time doing rugby, and I just—I was looking for a team that was intense, and I—I had—I had previously fenced in high school, and I'd done that all through middle school and high school. But there wasn't a varsity team at Dartmouth for fencing, so if I was going to do what I wanted—if I was going to do a sport, I wanted it to be a very high caliber sport.

And I'd gotten some advice from someone who had been upperclassman a couple of years above me, and he'd said, you know, like, "Based on—you know, I know your—your ranking and your level in fencing, and you'd really only be appropriately fit for, like, a varsity program, so if—if you're gonna be in the—in the club program, then it probably wouldn't make sense. Like, you wouldn't have the right level of competition there, and you might get frustrated." So he recommended trying something else. And so I was either going to join the rugby team or the rowing team, and I decided to join the rugby team.

KINNE: Okay, yeah, very cool.

I guess—so you talked about how that was a strong community. Could you talk a little bit more about maybe why—like, how it helps with, you know, the Dartmouth—I don't know—like, what made it a strong community for you within Dartmouth?

PASTUCK: Yeah. So, I mean, there were a ton of reasons for that. I think it's, you know, hard to even, like, quantify [chuckles] all of those reasons, but in particular—I mean, definitely having initial exposure to gay women was, like, really transformational for me to—to meet and be empowered and excited by—by—by gay women who—who were out and proud and, like, vibrant and living their lives. That was really

big for me, and I'd always heard growing up that lesbians were a certain type of person, and to have that disabused was really powerful.

I also found that having a cross-generational community of friends—so people who were younger than me, people who were older than me, not necessarily always having to have a group of friends who were in my class I think was really powerful and bonding as well, and feeling connections to alumni who'd graduated well before me and people who've come now—like, long after me. It—it's just nice to feel like my experience was a part of this chain and this legacy of that program.

I also think in general rugby is just a very physical sport and the idea that, you know, you put your body on the line, you learn how to use and love your body in ways that are brand new, especially for—for women. It was really—you know, especially for me, it was really powerful as a woman to feel like, *Wow! Becoming strong and lifting and running fast and evading and tackling.* These are all things that are very—I can feel really proud of myself and my body for being able to do. And using that physically to protect and defend my teammates. It just—it—it created this deep bond, I would say, with all the people who I played with and all the people I've played with since.

So I think in general, like, the sense of—the sense of community built through friends multigenerationally, built through friends who gave me exposure to the queer experience and, like, an array of different queer experiences, and then also just the physicality and the—the things that I learned about my body and about my teammates through that physicality.

KINNE: Okay, yeah, awesome. That makes sense.

Could you talk about now, like, some of your—a little bit of a tangent—of your earliest memories at Dartmouth?

PASTUCK: Oh, yeah! Wow! Well, I think that one of my earliest memories was definitely that experience on the Green, so going and meandering about and stumbling into the

women's rugby—like, pass the ball around session. Definitely remember that.

I remember distinctly, as well, a number—like, following that, we'd gone to this basement. It was a basement in—ah, where was it? It was in Mid Mass[achusetts Hall]. And it was a really dark basement, and that was where they were having their recruiting meeting. It felt very creepy. But then they told us that they'd made a video to show us what they were all about, and it was a video—and, again, you know, I'd been on campus for, like, forty-eight hours.

And they had put on this video [chuckles] where they'd all pretended to have superpowers, and it was all so weird. The superpowers were all over the place. It made totally no sense. One of the superpowers was hand washing, and it was just kind of an ASMR [autonomous sensory meridian response]-style video of hand washing for about thirty-five seconds.

And then there was another person whose superpower was, like, eating a lot of food. You know, it was just all sorts of silliness. And I feel like that was a really—that was a really powerful moment because I—and I [unintelligible] [the Dartmouth Outing Club First Year] Trips, but I feel like after Trips, coming back and seeing that there was this group that was like, silly and irreverent and brought some of that energy into the way that they were still living on campus was kind of cool and nice to see that—that feeling that I had on Trips, of like, *Wow! Everyone is so close and so funny and really just, like, living—living life to the fullest.* To see that this group was doing that was really amusing and heartwarming.

But I also would say—I would say that Trips—if I, you know, take it back another second, like, had a really amazing experience on Trips, and my experiences with my Trip leaders, who were so emotionally supportive and—even though I never really kept in touch with my Trippees, who—who had gone on—on my first Trip with, I felt like—you know, these were people from all over the place and who were all so different than me.

And some of them—I was actually on an international Trip, so I think two of my Trippees were international. It was just a

really exciting experience to meet so many people who were, you know, from all over the place and who had such different backgrounds.

KINNE: Right, yeah.

Another thing—so that you put in your notes and that I found through researching and such, that you were part of Sigma Delt[a], and obviously that was, you know, into your Dartmouth experience, but could you talk a little bit about that community?

PASTUCK: Oh, yes! Yeah, I was in Sigma Delt. I joined my sophomore fall. I actually lived in Sigma Delt for two years, junior and senior year. It was a—it was a fun, kind of wild place to live. I found—I found a ton of new friends through Sigma Delt, people who—who I definitely wouldn't have otherwise met. I think in general, Sigma Delt was just, like, a nice, really, like, fun community that I was able to have that was broader than my rugby team but still small enough that it felt homey.

And I really liked living in the house because I liked having that physical space and place that felt like it was mine and that it was ours, more collectively. I also really—I felt that it was really powerful being a part of a group on campus that was an all-women's group that had a basement and the ability to host parties. And I had a lot of exposure to Sigma Delt through the rugby team, and I had been there a number of times and definitely felt like I—I had a really good sentiment on the house before joining.

But I think in general, being a part of a community that was in some ways purposefully disrupting the flow and control and ownership of social spaces on campus, from fraternities to a sorority and, like, really trying to provide an alternative and an option that was women owned and for women I thought was really exciting and just a really eye-opening experience to be a part of.

And I think even for a lot of people that I've talked to since then, who went to other schools that didn't have Greek life, to be able to talk to them about how—I think it isn't—it isn't as powerful for them, for them to see, you know, "Oh, like, why were you in a sorority?" And they don't really

understand that most sororities don't have parties, first of all. And then second of all, that if you have a lot of your—your social life dominated by—by Greek life, to have all of those spaces be male owned and controlled definitely sets a very different tone for how those social interactions in those spaces take place.

So I feel like it was a very—a very interesting lesson in, like, gender politics [chuckles] a bit as well, being a member of Sigma Delt.

KINNE: Yeah.

So one thing I'm kind in interested in is the context of your time at Dartmouth being right before same-sex marriage became legal, and I guess—so I was reading an article that you contributed to in *The Dartmouth* about, like, you know, your time—your time at Dartmouth in relation to, like, PRIDE Week and stuff last—I think it was last year, or recently.

PASTUCK: Mm-hm.

KINNE: And just—so I guess I'm kind of curious about, like, what the attitude towards, like, other queer students was. Like, *was* there an attitude? What was it like to be in—I guess—was Sigma Delt or were other communities, like, considered to be, like, spaces *for* gay women? Like, was that a thing? [Chuckles.] I guess—that's kind of a lot of questions—

PASTUCK: Yeah.

KINNE: —but just, like, the attitudes.

PASTUCK: Well, I'll answer—I'll answer the—the last one first because I think that's easier. But I think definitely the rugby team and Sigma Delt—and there were a number of other spaces on campus, but they definitely had a reputation for being queer friendly, for being gay friendly. And I think that in particular—you know, it wasn't something—I think that saying that somewhere is gay friendly now, I think there—I think there are a lot of places that would consider themselves gay friendly now, just as a matter of branding. They don't feel like they can say that they're not gay friendly.

But, you know, it was true and genuine at the time that I think there were—there were a lot of other places that I would not have felt comfortable being gay or being out and places that wouldn't have been comfortable with me being gay or being out.

And I think—I think at an individual level, it wasn't as pronounced as was it kind of a macro trend level, and I think that's where it ties into your—your other question about kind of like the broader—the broader sentiment in the US [United States] and at Dartmouth at the time.

In general, I would say—I never really encountered what I would say is, like, open, direct hostility towards me about my sexuality at Dartmouth, but there definitely were a lot of offhanded, off-color comments, even, that I would experience from—from men, from other—from other women who didn't really understand and that were kind of problematic—was kind of problematic language.

But I think at the—at the end of the day, in general, I felt like I sort purposefully put myself in environments on—you know, socially that were gay friendly and queer friendly, so I wouldn't say that that was routine. It was just something of note. And I think as a woman, I was a little bit more insulated from it than some of my friends who were gay men. I think that they felt a much more pronounced antigay sentiment from some of their peers.

KINNE: Okay, yeah.

So I personally have, like, learned more about the history of—kind of like the Dartmouth community and its relationship with, like, homophobia—and just queerness through doing this project, but I'm curious about, like, if you kind of knew any of that kind of thing while being a student. Like, for example, the—like, *The Dartmouth Review* history in the eighties, like, and I don't remember exactly right now the name of the organization, but there was, like, potential outing of people during that time or, like, the history of Tri-Kap [Kappa Kappa Kappa], with kind of like—

PASTUCK: Yep.

KINNE: —forcing brothers out of the house. Were you aware of any of that kind of history?

PASTUCK: I do—I definitely—as a student, I was definitely aware of those stories. Yeah, the Laura [A.] Ingraham [Class of 1985] story for—from *The Dartmouth Review* and Dinesh [J.] D'Souza [Class of 1983]. I think—I also—I—I became even more acutely aware of those stories when I became the LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer] intern for OPAL [Office of Pluralism and Leadership] my senior year. So I think that—that was, I would say, the most impactful—when all that stuff kind of crystalized for me.

But I think it was, again, in that moment my—me broadening my perspective up further from just sort of Sigma Delt and the women's rugby team, where I had these—this more narrow experience and more narrow community, into being in a role where I was working with the administration, in a role where I was working to support others at the time—oh, gosh, what was it called? I don't know if it was called SPECTRA at the time, but there was—I feel like now—now my role as the president of DGALA [Dartmouth Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni/ae Association, or Dartmouth LGBTQIA+Alum Association], the LGBTQ alumni/ae association—now, like, all the names of the queer student groups blend together in my mind. [Chuckles.] But—because it changes every two to three years.

KINNE: Yeah.

PASTUCK: But—[Chuckles.] But I remember, you know, having more exposure, especially to people who felt more particularly marginalized, that—that really heightened my awareness of it, as someone who, you know, was in a Greek house and played a sport, I feel like in many ways I still was participating in a lot of, like, Dartmouth tropes and community attributes that gave me just general insulation from crit- —criticism, whereas my senior year, when I met a lot more people who identified—I'd say at the time—like, I—I would—I very much use the term "queer" to describe me now, but I wouldn't have used the term "queer" to describe me in 2010.

And having—having at the time met more people who would have proactively identified as queer while I was in school and in my senior year and who didn't feel comfortable in any Greek spaces, let alone single-sex Greek spaces, who didn't feel comfortable with the way that the administration had—had treated them around elements around their—you know, their gender, their pronouns. Or they felt discriminated against by their peers because of their appearance and the way that they dressed, I think—I think that was pretty eye opening, and so I—I became a lot more aware of that my—my senior year.

KINNE: Okay, yeah.

I guess—yeah, I would probably ask more about that. I was—I was curious about, yeah, the awareness or the—like, if there was a prolific community or—I don't know—even now—of—of gender queer people at the time and how may—how that differed from just, like, people who were more open about their sexuality or, like, if that was more of a subject that was less taboo or something?

PASTUCK: Yeah, I would say that there—there—and I—I think I'm sort of like referring to it, but I—I don't know if I necessarily would have said at the time—like, I don't know if I would have identified, like, *this is a gender nonconforming group of individuals*. Like, I think, you know, probably they—they would describe themselves that way now. I don't know if they would have described themselves that way then.

But there definitely—there definitely were—I don't think that it was a robust group. I mean, it had to be less than, like, fifteen people on campus that would have fallen vaguely within that category. But there was a gender-neutral floor for gender-neutral housing, which I was the UGA [undergraduate adviser] of while I was in school, so [cross-talk] we hosted weekly talks—

KINNE: And did that just mean—sorry.

PASTUCK: Go ahead.

KINNE: Yeah, I was just going to ask, like, what did—what did that mean [chuckles] for—

PASTUCK: Yeah. [Chuckles.] I was a UGA, but I didn't live there. But for the floor, it essentially meant that anyone of any gender could apply to live on the floor and that you could be roommates with any one of any identified gender. And we hosted Sunday brunches, where people would come, and we'd have—I worked with the director at OPAL, who covered LGBTQ issues, [Pamela S.] "Pam" Misener [pronounced MIZE-ner] at the time, and we'd come up with a topic, and we'd help guide a conversation around gender or sexuality at that time.

But I—I actually don't think there was anyone who was trans or gender nonconforming identified who lived on the floor, although there were certain many gay people who lived on the floor.

KINNE: Okay, yeah, interesting.

Okay, so switching gears, kind of, going along with this: You talk about also, like, when you came out as a junior to your parents and how the college was, you know, helpful in supporting you through that. Do you—could you talk a little bit about that time and that—and how that worked?

PASTUCK: Yeah. [Chuckles.] So I—I—I wouldn't say that I—I came out of the closet as much as I was dragged out of the closet by—by my parents, but I was. And it was—you know, not to get into too much detail, but it was very tough and very challenging, and I spent many months being very afraid of them. There was some physical and psychological abuse going on.

Essentially, I had a—I'd been sort of—when—when this all happened and my parents had—had confronted me and—and forced this information out of me, my—I kind of had been, like, put on lockdown, so all of my communication devices—like, my computer, my—my phone, everything that I had—was taken away from me, so I was just kind of on lockdown at home and kept there for several weeks. And I wasn't able to communicate with anyone in the outside world, and my parents said that they wouldn't send me back to school.

And I was very afraid, so sort of the—the way that we'd come to an understanding of how I could go back to school was that I had promised to—you know, as—as crazy as it sounds, there was a formal contract that they had written up, and I agreed that I would stop playing rugby, that I would not date women, that I would try dating men, and that I would—you know, there was a qua- —I can't even remember, but there was, like, a quantified number of men that I would try to date. And I just agreed to whatever it was that my parents were saying so I could get back to school and get out of that situation.

So I did. And then, yeah, I spent several months very—very upset, very afraid at school. Definitely did not perform well [chuckles] in school during that time academically. And I met regularly with my dean, trying to figure out what solutions could be, if and—and when they would cut off funding for school, because they—they said that they would as—as—if I did not adhere to the terms of the contract.

So unfortunately, you know, things kind of—they escalated when I had gone home for the summer break, and there was a physical incident with my mom. My mom ended up getting arrested, and I actually was in a position where I just felt, you know, like, totally abandoned because, you know, essentially the only way—there were—there were very few reasons for how you can be physic- —like, financially emancipated from your family.

So just you can't—you can't, as a parent, say, "I no longer—I no longer like you as a [chuckles]—as one of my progeny. You do not get any money from me for college or for anything." And regardless of how financially independent you really are, your parents are not off the hook for that.

So there were only a couple of reasons for that, and I did not qualify under any of those criteria. Even with the physical abuse, I would have had to actually gone and proactively filed a restraining order in New Jersey and then, like, applied for a separate petition to have no contact and not have any connection with my family, which felt like such an extreme—like, it—it felt like an irreparable type of damage that then I would do *back* to my family.

So I was fortunate and lucky—I'd actually—I had enough credits that I only had to do two more terms of school left, my senior fall and winter. And the Dartmouth LGBTQ alumni organization stepped up, and they actually—it was through the director of OPAL at the time. She was able to get me in touch with them, and they helped pay the remaining balances of some of my funds that I had to pay in order to graduate.

So I—I feel—I felt very grateful. And, again, you know, it wasn't the college. Like, the college did what, you know, they thought that they could, and my dean did what she felt she could at the time. But I just—I just candidly didn't qualify to be emancipated from them, you know, regardless of what the circumstances were.

So it really was through the kindness of strangers who were a part of the Dartmouth family that I was able to graduate, and so—and I think that—that's just in general why I've been so grateful and wanted to give back and be a contributing member of this organization for alumni, because I was a direct beneficiary of them when I was a student.

KINNE: Yeah. Okay. Well, thank you for sharing that.

I'm just curious—and I don't know if you would know any of this, but do you know if, like, the laws around emancipation are still the same? Is it different by state, do you know?

PASTUCK: No, it's a federal—it's a federal rule, so I think that the criteria are around you have to either have been in the military; you have to be married; you have to have a child so you can, like, be a mother or a father, and if you're, like, independently parenting a child, you can be considered emancipated; and then I believe that the fourth criteria was instances of, like, child domestic abuse.

KINNE: Okay. Wow.

PASTUCK: But then there were—there were, like, strict criteria around that as well, so your parents can't decide, "I won't pay for X and Y" and not be considered financially liable.

KINNE: Right.

Okay, so, yeah, if you don't mind me asking some more details a little bit—

PASTUCK: Yeah, no.

KINNE: —just about, like,—so if—you had this kind of contract thing, and did you stop playing rugby at the time, or, like, did you try to adhere to the contract?

[Recording glitch]

KINNE: This is a new recording, by necessity, but hopefully that's okay.

PASTUCK: No problem.

KINNE: Okay. Sorry about that. Anyway, I was—I was curious if—yeah, so the contract, if you had tried to adhere to it—if, like, you—

PASTUCK: No. [cross-talk]. That's the short answer. [Laughs.]

KINNE: Yeah. Okay.

PASTUCK: I—I—I did—I did what I thought I needed—I—I agreed to anything I thought I could agree to in order to—

KINNE: To get to school, okay.

PASTUCK: —get back to Dartmouth, yeah.

KINNE: Right. Okay. And so then was—did you find OPAL and that—that—I guess what you describe as the—the job? Or was it a job, or like a—an internship through that?

PASTUCK: Yeah, the internship was a job. That actually—I had become—I became the LGBTQ intern my senior year, after this had all happened, so, you know, in many ways it was, like, sort of a blessing on a couple of different fronts in that the LGBTQ director at OPAL was able to connect me with the alumni group to help pay for school and also able to connect me to this and a few other paying jobs so that I could make some other money additionally.

KINNE: Okay, yeah.

One thing I saw that—I don't remember where it was, but that you were an OUTreach Peer Mentor? I was just curious about what that meant, what that was, because we don't have it anymore.

PASTUCK: Yeah. So we had OUTreach Peer Mentors. It was—it was created by two of my very good friends, actually, [Christopher] "Chris" Fletcher and [Robert] "Rob" Avruch [pronounced AHV-rooch], both '11s. And they—they started this program to connect upper-class queer students to students in younger class years, and—yeah, I mean, I think there were about twenty-five students in the whole program, and everyone got matched up.

Basically, I got matched up with a '14 who was a freshman at the time and met with her I would say probably, like, four or five times during the year and had coffee. It was—it was a really nice program, to meet someone new, and I hope that it was as meaningful for Angie [spelling unconfirmed] as it was for me. But, you know, it was in many ways just a nice opportunity to meet new people outside of your—your core—your core group of friends.

KINNE: Right. Great. Cool.

Another thing I saw in the yearbook: Abaris [pronouncing it ah-BAR-iss]? What is that?

PASTUCK: Oh, yeah. That was Abaris [pronounced AB-uh-riss].

KINNE: Oh, I'm sorry.

PASTUCK: It was my senior year society that I was in, yeah. yeah.

KINNE: Yeah. I'm not sure of—I mean, I'm—I'm a senior now, so, like, I don't—I don't know all of the—all of the ones that are still around. It could be in existence, for all I know. [Chuckles.]

PASTUCK: I have—I have an instinct that it's still around, based on—

KINNE: Yeah, probably.

PASTUCK: —there's—there's still an active Facebook group that appears to have current students in it, so—[Chuckles.]

KINNE: Okay. Nice. Cool. I was just curious.

So before we get into, like, after Dartmouth, kind of, I guess one question I was curious about is: During your time, would you have recommended Dartmouth to other students, like, applying?

PASTUCK: Absolutely. I mean, I—I feel like Dartmouth was the place where I learned to have my own voice. I learned to find my own perspective, to see things with a different lens and to see things with the lens of other people's. So I—I loved it, and I—I still—I mean, to this day I'm still very involved and really love the school.

I think—I think in many ways it was because of the strength of the individual communities that I was able to find in Sigma Delt and on rugby team. Actually, I had—I had a wonderful time in Abaris. I—I loved all the people that I met through there—actually, a lot—a lot of queer—queer people there too. In general, I—I found a lot of different, distinct communities at school, and I was very appreciative of all of them, in addition to the perspective and voice that I found, myself, there.

KINNE: Mm-hm. Actually, I—by mistake—I made a mistake. I have a few more questions about Dartmouth.

PASTUCK: Oh, sure, no problem.

KINNE: Just—I guess I was wondering if there was anything, like, that happened in the news, in the world at the time that you remember as being, like, significant parts of college life or, like, you know, they made significant waves in people's lives.

PASTUCK: Well, I mean, I remember all of the news around [California] Prop[osition] 8 that was happening while I was in school, and that was—I'm not sure if you're familiar with the Proposition 8 issue, but there was a referendum in California to overturn the state- —the state-approved marriage equality,—

KINNE: Oh. Yeah.

PASTUCK: —and it—it passed, so—so, you know, it was just a—it was a very, like, kind of violent times in the news around gay marriage, and I think that was—you know, you—I would say more so even than—like, marriage equality was passed shortly after that, but it was kind of the heyday of the Human Rights Campaign, like, the start of all the Love Is Love messaging that—that they were putting out there, and trying to—to counteract the—some of the more vitriolic messaging that was going on, especially in the news, more broadly.

I would say that it was a—it was a—it was a time when, like, liberal politicians would not openly say that they supported gay marriage, so, like, there was not—you know, really over the span of probably, like, while I was in school/the two years—you know, like, year, two years afterwards while the—before the [U.S.] Supreme Court case for [Edith] “Edie” Windsor took place with, like, Windsor versus I think the State of New York? I can’t remember.

But the—like, the pub- —the public opinion about that changed pretty wildly over that span of time. So I remember Prop 8 being in the news a lot.

More—more kind of like a cultural touch point, I remember, like, on TV, on Showtime there was a show *The L Word*, which actually just recently even rebooted this past year. But *The L Word* was this six-season show about gay women living in L.A. [Los Angeles, California], and—

KINNE: Yeah, I know it.

PASTUCK: It was, like, a—it was, like, a whole bit cultural trope, and, like, my—Sigma Delt had Showtime so that we could all watch it, and people would come from all over campus because we had Showtime. And so, yeah, there was always this big group of people who would congregate to watch the show.

KINNE: Oh, that’s so fun! [Chuckles.] That’s hilarious. Okay. Yeah.

PASTUCK: And then there—we had—when the show ended, I think my junior year? And when the show ended, we had to have a— a vote at the sorority to be, like, “Okay, well, now that *The L Word* is over, do we want to get rid of Showtime?” And it was, like, a unanimous yes. No one cared about anything else on Showtime.

KINNE: [Chuckles.] Oh, that’s funny. Cool.

And then I just wanted to ask about Trips, because I saw that you were Trip leader several times.

PASTUCK: Yes, I was!

KINNE: Yeah, so you obviously had a good experience with Trips.

PASTUCK: Yes, I—so I—I loved my Trip, and then I—I signed up to be a Trip leader my sophomore year. Actually, I had a really lovely experience with my co-leader my sophomore year, and—Dylan Nelson. I hope he doesn’t mind that I mention his name. He was an ’09. And he—he had an experience when his—his mother had come out and was a lesbian and was married to another woman, and I feel like it was just—I—I hadn’t come out yet then, but I—I remember distinctly, because I remember feeling and knowing sort of deep in my bones that—that I *was* gay at the time, but not being out to anyone, and there was just—you know, it was just so wonderful to talk to this guy who—who was straight and, you know, like, hear him talk about how proud and loved—how much, you know, he still loved his mother and that she’d come out and that she was, like, happy and found love. I was, like, *Oh, wow! You know, like, maybe the—maybe the world is, like, ready for this and ready for me.*

But, yeah, I led—I led trips both my sophomore, junior and senior year, and I actually led a Strip [Sophomore Trip] as well, for sophomores over the sophomore summer, so I—I guess I got—I got five Trips in the span of four years.

[Chuckles.]

KINNE: Nice. Wow. I’m jealous. Yeah.

Okay, so, yes, now I’ll move into after Dartmouth. I see obviously you work at Google. That’s exciting. Could you tell

me a little bit about, like, I guess your, like, post graduation, how you got to where you are now career wise?

PASTUCK:

So I—as you may have guessed from, you know, my allusion to it earlier, I—I did not do great in school my— [Chuckles.]. And I—I found—academically, I just—I struggled, both because I was emotionally very distressed and also just being a biology major, it was very hard, and I was very stubborn, and I really wanted to do it and see it through. And I'd always loved biology ever since I was a kid, and I always thought of myself as being good at it, so not being a biology major would have probably just crushed me.

But I—I had always thought that I wanted to become a scientist and go into a Ph.D. program, and I actually—I was very fortunate to have this guy, who was our—our strength trainer, who was a Ph.D. student in immunology, [Michael] "Mike" Malloy—he—he actually advised me if I didn't love it and couldn't do anything possibly else, that I should try to do something else because it's a very hard and difficult and long career, and, you know, he saying, "If you don't love it—if you don't love it so much now that you can't do anything else, you definitely won't love it at the end of a eight-year Ph.D. program."

So I applied to a whole bunch of different consulting jobs. I didn't get any of them. I didn't really have great grades. And I went and did the Tuck [Business] Bridge Program the summer between my—well, I guess my—right after I graduated. And I really liked it. I found—I just—I kind of didn't know what I wanted to do, and they were—they were very kind to me because I didn't have any money to pay for the program.

And through a hookup—actually, through my therapist [both chuckle], who knew someone who worked at the—the—at the Tuck Bridge School Program, they just gave me a loan to go—you know, kind of like—not pay, and they said, "After you get a job, you can start paying back the loan, like, with no interest." So they just let me do that.

And it was very kind and generous. I did end up getting a job, like, two or three months after the Tuck Bridge Program. I really liked the marketing class that I took there, and I loved

the marketing professor, and after that, I—you know, I just—she advised—for people who didn't have any experience, like, going to look at jobs at advertising agencies. And so I worked—I ended up getting a job at Digitas in New York and working at an ad agency there and then for another advertising agency for another four years.

And eventually I—I was working with someone who worked at Google, and he switched teams, so he stopped being kind of my—my account team main point of contact, and moved on to another team. And he said, "Hey, you know, I've got someone who—now I'm on a new team. You're not my customer anymore. Are you interested in coming to work for me?"

And it worked out. So I feel very—I feel very grateful, and I feel like there's a lot of karma that I learned through that story: to—to be nice to people you work with, even if they're not at your company, because you never know where they're going to pop up or how you can interact with them again. So I—I sort of had that—that lucky experience.

KINNE: Great. Nice. Very cool.

And then how did you end up president of DGALA?

PASTUCK: Mmm, yeah, good question. [Chuckles.] So I ended up—I—I joined the DGALA board of directors the winter after graduating, and like I said,—so I've been basically been a member of the board of directors since graduating. And I wanted to join the organization that had done so much for me and be a part of that and hopefully help boost the organization and make it better.

So I just, you know, reached out. I had a friend who was an '09 who was on the board, and I asked him, "Like, am I too young?" "No." And they actually—you know, I was elected. None of it—none of the people—and it was all anonymous, so none of the people on the board knew that it was me that they'd helped, so it was also just kind of, you know, a cool experience to—to, like, obviously have that—that moment with them face to face and, like, directly to be able to tell them how much they than- —like, how grateful I was for their help.

So it was a—that—so I joined then, but I—I became the president actually a little bit over a year ago, but I'd been the vice president before that for—for a number of years.

KINNE: Oh, okay, wow.

PASTUCK: So I've been—I've been on the board for I guess almost nine years now.

KINNE: Wow. Yeah. What has your overall experience been, like, with that organization? I'm not really totally sure, like, what the group does. Do you, like,—yeah.

PASTUCK: So it's—I was in it—you know, not to go all mission statement-y on you, but generally to support students and the college in, like, making sure there are enough resources for LGBTQ students, that they are—you know, there's LGBTQ programming on campus, that students and staff feel supported in the community, and then beyond that, also ensuring and building connection between alumni to alumni and then also alumni to students.

So there's a—I'd say there's kind of like two different prongs: one, working with students and with the college to ensure that LGBT people are supported, and then alternatively, through—through the alumni organization, being able to connect other alumni to one another and being able to connect students and alumni, and just facilitating those types of connections and conversations.

KINNE: Yeah. And I—so I think—so [J.] Caitlin Birch, who is—sets up the int- —or, like, leads the SpeakOut thing—has said that the organization—and you have been very supportive of SpeakOut as a initiative, so that's great, and thank you for that. I will also say I—I gave an—I did an interview earlier in the year, and the person I spoke to was very, like, positively speaking about, like, his experiences meeting people through the organization and everything like that, so that's—that's awesome.

PASTUCK: That's great.

KINNE: Yeah.

PASTUCK: Very affirming of the work that we're doing.

KINNE: Yes. And I would ask also with that: Like, what are your current feelings about the administration, either, like, with your work with DGALA or just, like, in general, feelings about the college in its current state, that kind of thing?

PASTUCK: Yeah, you're going to—you're really gonna get me down—

KINNE: [Chuckles.]

PASTUCK: —on the record about this, huh? Wow. So, I mean, I—you know, just to—to, like briefly touch on that, I—I think the college has come a long, long way in the work that they've done, and I still think that there's a lot of work to be done and that we can do to grow together. I think—I think they have certainly evolved with the world, but I think there still is more—and especially, you know, one of the things that we're acutely focused on is that over twenty percent of Gen[eration] Z identifies as queer, and for Dartmouth to continue to be an attractive and—attractive and—you know, high- —high-yield school moving forward, it has to—there just has to be a place for twenty percent of this population that identifies as queer, and for them to see themselves and to see themselves flourishing on this campus.

So we really—we're trying to work closely right now with the admissions department to build programs out to ensure that—and data around queer students as captured, and that they can—they can really focus in and make sure that this a community that they're serving well and that, you know, they're—the data and the insights around how they're performing with this community aren't just erased or ignored.

And I think on top of that—you know, once—once they do come to campus, ensuring that they do have positive experiences. I think the—the Triangle House and some of the living and learning communities have really elevated that experience for a lot of people, but I know there's still more work to be done. And when I talk to students on a daily basis, they—they confirm that there still is more work to be done.

So I think at the end of the day—I think at the end of the day, there's a lot—a lot of work to still—to still be done. You know, I feel—I feel sometimes frustrated when I hear—especially from older—older gay people, that, you know, it's, like, "Oh, everything's good now." But, you know, really there still are a lot of challenges that lie ahead, and also room—room to grow and room to ensure that all sorts of people feel supported. And I think the college is doing a—an admirable job right now and that there still is more [chuckles] that can be done.

KINNE: Yeah, I think that was one of the—that was one of the highlights I saw of that article that I mentioned earlier about—I think it was from—was it from PRIDE last year, or—

PASTUCK: Yeah, I think so. I—I—I came up to speak at Lavender Graduation last year, so it was probably from that.

KINNE: Okay, yeah. Yeah.

And then kind of going back to your story with your family earlier, and if you don't mind me asking kind of like—it's—2011 wasn't *that* long ago, but I guess, like, has your relationship with your family improved since that time? Yeah.

PASTUCK: Somewhat. You know, candidly, not as much as I would like. I—my relationship with one of my sisters has substantially improved. I feel like I have a very good relationship with her now, especially relative to—to where it was in the past. But my relationship with most of my family is still pretty poor.

So, you know, it's in a—it's in a place where we are speaking to one another, which was not the case for years, but, you know, still—still very much a struggle and something that I never—I don't really know if it will ever be okay. But I'm—I'm very encouraged that one of my sisters has really, like, reached out and been proactive and—and wants to reestablish our relationship, so some—some silver linings in that cloud, for sure, even, you know, recently.

KINNE: Right. And, yeah, you said—I think you said you were dragged out of the closet? Would you have any, like, thoughts or maybe advice on the concept of coming out for like,—like, for current queer students, I guess?

PASTUCK: Yeah. Uh! I mean, I think it's ha- —I think it's a really still challenging experience for—for everyone. I think in general, the base—like, the idea—no one has to—no one has to come out as a straight, right? Like, there's just kind of like a default assumed, and, you know, essentially you have to, like, identify that you're non-default and confirm and reiterate that to people.

And it—it happens all the time, so I think—I think the other thing I would say maybe, even just—I don't know—everyone is going to come out in their own way, but I would say that probably the—the thing that I find most interesting about being out is that, you know, I have to come out all the time. I—I was in a customer meeting last week, and I'm, like, *Ah, man, am I gonna really go there right now?* And I chose to, and—but, you know, you're coming out to coworkers, you're coming out to new people you're meeting, you're coming out to friends.

You never really know where anyone is coming from and—and what their experiences are, so it's just sort of like, *Okay, well, you know, if*—it's easy to do that with people that you don't depend on, but if they're—these are people are that you're going to be depending on for, you know, a business relationship or, you know, at your coffee sh- —like, do you really know how they're going to react and if there's something that they, you know, could do that would, like, jeopardize your ability to complete what you're trying to complete with them, if they knew more, like—if they knew this about you.

And I think that's just something, you know, that's I think important to know, that, you know, coming out is never really over.

KINNE: Yeah. I gue- —okay, yeah. Thank you. I'm just thinking what else—oh, hopefully—I guess this is kind of like a fun question: What advice would you have given to your first-year self, or what would—yeah—like, as a freshman at Dartmouth?

PASTUCK: Ooh! I think I would have given advice to myself to—to really just, like, you know, be more open and, like, talk to more

people and meet more people. I think I—I think I tried to—I—I found a community immediately and was just so excited and entranced by it that I—I didn't really break out beyond that. But it—I think—I think I could have done more and—and built more com- —like, interconnected community by trying to stay in touch with my Trippees, by trying to stay in touch with my freshman floor, to just—you know, whoever it was, actually provoking myself to be—to go outside of my comfort zone with—with—socially.

KINNE: Okay.

PASTUCK: Also, not to have taken physiology and anatomy and—gosh, what did it take? I took two—two science labs my freshman winter—

KINNE: Oh, my gosh!

PASTUCK: [cross-talk] —and I should not have done that. [Laughs.]

KINNE: Yeah, actually—

PASTUCK: I also—I also would tell myself *not* to do that. [Laughs.]

KINNE: Yes. That was one thing I want to touch on again, because you—you said you were a biology major, but I don't think I actually asked what you studied at Dartmouth. You studied biology and—?

PASTUCK: I was a philosophy minor.

KINNE: Okay. Yes. Okay, just to get that in there also.

PASTUCK: Yeah.

KINNE: So, yeah, I don't have any other specific questions, but I guess if there's something that you feel like is a part of this that feels like it could belong in this interview, or—or not, something you just want to share that you feel like I just haven't asked.

PASTUCK: No, I mean, this is—I hope that this all—you know, hit all the touch points for you. I probably should run in the next minute or so anyway because I'm about to fly out to Nashville

[Tennessee] this evening, for fun. But I—I—I thank you again for—for doing this. I'm—I'm so happy and thrilled that students are volunteering and a part of this organ- —this activity, so very—very exciting. And I'm really excited to see the results.

KINNE: Yes. I—I have to say it's been a pretty, like, inspiring/heartening project to be a part of, so thank you for offering your time and answering all my questions,—

PASTUCK: [cross-talk]. Yeah, no. Of course.

KINNE: —even though it's kind of like a—it is, like, kind of a weird setup, where it's just like you telling a stranger about your life.

PASTUCK: Yeah. [Chuckles.]

KINNE: But—so—so thank you.

[End of interview.]